
"The Greek World" in the Perception of Latin Intellectuals

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Abstract:

The article examines the problem of the perception of "the Greek world" by the Latin intellectuals of the V and the beginning of the VI century AD, i.e. in the period of time when political, cultural and somewhat religious dissociation between the Western and Eastern parts of the Roman Empire became visible. The hermeneutic analysis of narrative, epistolary and didactic works written in the Latin West in V–VI centuries has been carried out in the article.

The «system codes» through which Latin intellectuals perceived both their own and the Greek world have been reconstructed by the identification of the tropes, metaphors and similes. It has been concluded that the Greek world had been still taking on a role of the creator and preserver of high culture, a kind of indicator of the cultural achievements of the West in the minds of Latin authors of the V–VI century. At the same time the Latin authors' desire to establish their own self-sufficiency and even cultural superiority in the competition with the Greeks was quite obvious. The article shows that belonging to the Greek civilization served as an identifying feature of noble Roman's which also forced the representatives of German elite to strive for both the Roman and the Greek education in their ambition to legitimize their authority among the Italian population.

Keywords: Late Antiquity, The Roman Intellectual Class, Roman Education and School, Cultural Identity, Sidonii Apollinaris, Ennodius, Cassiodorus

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1. Introduction

One of the problems that inevitably arise for researchers of the so-called "transitional epochs" is definition of boundaries of cultural and social identity by people of the time being studied. Among the most complex and contradictory epochs in European history, the era of Late Antiquity can be considered with good reason, because dynamic reinterpretation of the world around contemporaries occurred against the background of its significant transformation occurred during it. The purpose of this article is to determine how the attitude towards the Greek world sideways intellectuals of the late Antique West was formed (mainly in the 5th - beginning of the 6th century), which, to our point of view, will allow us to establish the degree of continuity of social consciousness (albeit elitist one) to intellectual constructs worked out during the heyday of the Ancient Roman civilization, and also revealed innovations that could be indicative of the birth of a new, already medieval, relationship between the Western (Roman) and the Eastern (Greek) worlds.

The question of attitude of educated Romans and Gallic-Romans of V-VI centuries to the Greeks and the Greek East is extremely important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the ethnic map of Western Europe has seriously changed during the V century, its territory became home to many Germanic, as well as partly Turkic, Slavonic tribes. These ethnic processes inevitably had to exacerbate the Romans sense of national and cultural identity. In this regard, it is important to consider the extent to which Roman (Gallic-Roman) intellectuals saw themselves as part of a wider, Graeco-Roman, civilization. Secondly, at the turn of V-VI centuries a new political ideology was formed, designed to find a place for political entities of Germans in relation to Constantinople in a situation where the power over the western Roman provinces was given to barbarian kings, whose authority was supported by the local elite. Thirdly, there are serious changes in the relationship between the Roman Church (more broadly - Western churches) and the Church of Constantinople at the turn of V-VI centuries. The Akacian schism, born by the Enoticon of Emperor Zeno, also apparently could not but leave a mark on the attitude of Latinians towards the Greek world (On the relation of Ennodius to the Greek East relating to the schism, see especially Bartlett (2001)).

2. Methodological framework

To achieve this goal, we'll analyze the comparatively wide literary bulk of Latin texts of the fifth and first half of the sixth century. First of all, we should speak about works by Latin rhetoricians (eulogies, letters, didactic works) by Sidonius Apollinarius, Maricianus Capella, Ennodius, Cassiodorus, where in one way or another assessment of the cultural status of contemporary society are given, including the context of achievements of Hellenic culture and civilization. Secondly, these are essays that can be conditionally referred to as "church literature" (primarily, hagiography artifacts), which allow to define an important Greek culture and, in particular, a language for an evangelizing society. Carrying out hermeneutic analysis as works created in the Latin

West of the fifth and sixth centuries, revealing tropes, metaphors and comparisons allows us to reconstruct the "system of codes" in which Latin intellectuals perceived both their own and the Greek world.

Reading and analysis of sources allowed to achieve the following results in solving the problem posed. The Greek world in Latin literature of the V - the first half of the VI cent. received assessments that can be arranged at three main levels: cultural (evaluation of Greek civilization and its contribution to the culture of the Romans), political (assessment of Constantinople power and its solutions on the fate of the West), confessional (attitude to religious situation in the East). At the same time, the special attention of Latin intellectuals was focused on the cultural contribution of the Greek world, achievements of which served as an indicator, allowing to appreciate the level of success of a particular representative of the Roman or Gallic-Roman elite. Despite the political and partly confessional disengagement, despite the transformation of the Greek language into the language of the elite, the Greek East was still perceived as a teacher, even if a student was sometimes more successful. The "Greek" component in the political ideology of V-VI centuries was so significant that even the Ostrogoth elite retains the orientation toward Greek culture; it was the adherence of Ostrogothic queens to Greek culture, the study of the Greek language that enabled them to position themselves as successors of traditions of Roman statehood. Let us consider these provisions in more detail.

3. Results and Discussion

Culturally, the Greek world acted as an absolute ideal as it did before. Representatives of Roman (Latin) culture, as well as centuries ago, continuing the tradition from Cicero (Nikishin, 2011), gave the Greeks the first place in the field of sciences and arts. This sense of cultural superiority of Greeks over Romans which gradually became a common place in Latin literature, does not disappear in the fifth century. Not surprisingly, one of the brightest church rhetoricians of the first half of the fifth century, Hilarius of Arelat, the author of the life of Saint Honoratus, speaking of intention of his hero – Honoratus – to leave Gaul and go to Achaea together with his brother Venantius, writes literally the following: "... they (Honoratus and Venantius – auth.) are rushing to shores on which Roman education... was revered for barbarism" (Valentin, 1977). This evaluation of Roman and Greek education, was put by Hilarius into mouth of inhabitants of the Hellas judging by the tonality of the entire passage, is completely shared by the Latin author himself.

Several decades later, at the beginning of the sixth century already, in order to emphasize achievements of his nephew Avienus and then Boethius, Ennodius not only speaks of the high level of their education, but especially emphasizes their command of not only Roman, but also Greek (Attic) eloquence. Let's compare two letters. Addressing Faustus in connection with receipt of consulate by his son Avienus, Ennodius describes his nephew: "He (Avienus) has mastered all that perfection the Attic and the Roman have; he estimated "the gold of Demosthenes" and "the iron of

Cicero"; he, who spoke Latin, succeeded, however, in both rhetoric ways"(Bartlett, 2001). Similarly, he praised Boethius several years later: "He beamed between the swords of Cicero and Demosthenes and reached the heights of one and the other of the named [speakers] ... Let no one be embarrassed by the discord of Attic and Roman perfection and let no one doubt that exclusive talents [of two] nations are represented"(Bartlett, 2001).

As can be seen, in both cases, Ennodius uses one topos: letters were written with difference of seven years, but in both letters, Cicero and Demosthenes, the two greatest speakers of the past, joined by Plutarch when writing comparative biographies as examples of rhetorical perfection. But if in the message to Boethius they are depicted as equal figures by Ennodius, then in the letter to Faustus where the language is more metaphorical, the superiority of the Hellene Demosthenes compared with the Roman Cicero is as obvious as superiority of gold over iron.

Already in the middle of the fifth century, a good knowledge of Greek language and possession of Greek eloquence, despite appearance of such Graecophiles as Claudian Mamert or Gennady of Massilia, are exceptional even for the circle of educated people which becomes the subject of complaints of such jealous supporters of classical education as Sidonius Apollinarius (Mathisen, 1988; Zakharova, 2014; Sophronova and Khazina, 2014).

Of course, in the V century, despite all the internal vicissitudes and, in particular, the invasion of barbarians, the Roman school continued to exist and the traditional education system in the western part of the Empire. And, as has long been shown by Henri Marrou (1956), the late-antique school did not differ much from the school of the Hellenistic period: the same subjects were taught and the approaches cardinal differences from ones offered by Seneca and Quintilianus. So knowledge of the Hellenic language, albeit the most common (Greek was taught privately in aristocratic homes) was the necessary component of Roman education.

As the simple acquaintance with Marcianus Capella's "Grammar" shows, whose text could very well have been used as a teaching assistance at schools, a resident of western provinces, starting school, first of all had to learn that the subject he was studying – grammar – although it was born in Egypt, reached his heights namely in Attica, and from there it came to descendants of Mars and Venus (Willis, 1983). This genetic connection between Latin grammar and Greek is a red thread through the entire book by Marcianus Capella. On its pages, speaking in front of the meeting of the gods, the Grammar convinces that many features of the Latin language are the result of changes in the Greek rule or deviations from it (see, for example, his explanation of stresses in names).

It is difficult to judge how much the Greek language was known and understood by a wider circle of inhabitants of the cities of the Western Empire of the second half of the V – the first half of the VI century. Judging by Cassiodorus's reservations in the

preface to the "Instructions in the Sciences of the Divine and Secular", not all the inhabitants of the Vivarium created by him could read Greek texts. "If anyone," he writes, "discovers any negligence by the named (Latin – author.) writers, let him, if he knows the language, consult the Greek interpreters about this" (Mynors, 1963). Cassiodorus intentionally directs them to read Roman authors, justifying the rejection of attention to the Greek tradition by the fact that "it is more pleasant for everyone to perceive what is transmitted in the native language" (Mynors, 1963).

At the same time, examples of how fearlessly some off springs of aristocratic families in the 5th century left their fathers' houses to understand the perfection of monastic life in Egypt and Syria, are said to be most likely in favour of the fact that bilingualism (not known whether high quality) in aristocratic families was the norm. The curious thing in this connection, perhaps, is the case which leads authors of "The Life of Saint Caesarius of Arles". At the beginning of his episcopal ministry, that is, in early years of the 6th century, Caesarius "inspired and urged the lay people to learn psalms and hymns by heart and sing prosaic antiphons in a high and melodic voice like clerics: some in Greek, others in Latin" (Krusch, 1896). Of course, it can be assumed that in Arles, a major city, the capital of the civil prefecture, ethnic Greeks lived in considerable numbers and they were the ones who were supposed to perform hymns and psalms in their native language. But even if this is so, Caesarius's very desire to have Greek speech, the language of the Septuagint and the Gospels sounded in the temple of Arles, is very revealing.

And yet, the Roman school taught primarily Latin grammar, and command of the Greek language received additionally was increasingly perceived as a sign of elitism. Even the poorest command of it allowed the writer to emphasize the high level of his education, and the use of Greek words in his letters became a kind of code designed to emphasize the author's and the recipient's affiliation to "their", circle of "the chosen ones" – genuine aristocrats, Romans, high intellectuals (Mathisen, 1993). Sidonius Apollinaris, the brightest representative of rhetorical culture of late Antiquity in the Latin West, though not having ease of handling with the Greek language, nevertheless trying to follow high standards of Roman epistolography, filled his works with hundreds of Greekisms (Zakharova, 2014).

The idea that the involvement of a Roman into Greek intellectual heritage is a property that gives it a special dignity – it becomes a common place in letters and speeches of the turn of the 5th-6th centuries. As Arnold (2008) rightly writes, the command of Greek knowledge as well as availability of traditional education as a whole, was turned by Roman intellectuals into an important component of "the romanitas". This involvement in Greek civilization enabled a man of non-Roman origin (Gallic or Germanic) to legitimize his position in a society still conscious of itself as a Roman one (Arnold, 2008). It was this what allowed the Gaul Felix to establish himself in the Roman Senate at the beginning of the VI cent. Even earlier Greek sophistication and Greek knowledge of Emperor Antemius served as the basis for his praise in the panegyric to Sidonius Apollinarius. Sidonius gives a rather vivid image of Antemius

as a man full of Greek and Latin education, hints at various authors whom Antemius read, which undoubtedly should flatter the emperor, but, on the other hand, this enumeration was intended to demonstrate to the Romans their own knowledge of Sidonius, an immigrant from Gaul, and show him a true Roman (Arnold, 2008).

The connection to the Greek world becomes an object of extra pride. Many senators of Rome either started their career in Constantinople, or could boast of their blood relationship with the Greek world. A brilliant career made in the East could serve as a source of respect in Italy. Cassiodorus was obviously proud that his relatives (in particular, Heliodorus) occupied high positions in the East. Addressing the Senate, he talks about his family: it is "a genus that is well-known in both parts of the world, which is honorably involved in both senates... and radiates the purest radiance" (Mommsen, 1894). Everything says of the readiness of the Roman elite at the end of the 5th and beginning of the 6th century to see Constantinople as an integral part of that political world, the part of which this elite also felt itself to be.

During the reign of Theodoric the Great (493-526), thanks to efforts of such highly educated courtiers as Cassiodorus, the ideas of the value of Greek wisdom and knowledge born in the Greek world are transferred from the individual level to the level of state ideology. Seeking to portray the Germanic King Theodoric as a bearer and protector of the romantics (Shkarenkov, 2004), Cassiodorus puts assessments and characteristics shared primarily by the Roman intellectual and political elite into his mouth. Thus, in the letter of Theodoric to Boethius compiled by Cassiodorus (507), the praise to the addressee for bringing the Greek education to the Roman world sounds "for making the establishment (dogmata) of the Greeks to become a Roman teaching" (Mommsen, 1894). Thanks to translations of Boethius, the Barbarian King continues by Cassiodorus, the Italic language is spoken by the music theorist (musicus) Pythagoras and the astronomer Ptolemy, "in Avzonium, [voices] of the arithmetic of Nicomachus and the geometer of Euclid are heard, and the theologian Plato and the logician Aristotle reason each other in the language of Quirits" (Mommsen, 1894). On another occasion (in 524) Cyprianus, the son of Opilius, a commit of sacred bounties, receives praise from Theodoric not only because he knows three languages, but also because he surpassed the Greeks in fineness of intellect (Mommsen, 1894).

Such an approach to depiction of the Barbarian ruler as a legitimate defender of Roman society persisted in Italy for some time after Theodoric the Great. Amalasunta, the daughter of the King, who received power after death of the crowned father, thanks to Cassiodorus, turns into a real ruler of not only Goths, but also Romans thanks to his perfection in Latin, Greek and Gothic (Mommsen, 1894). Especially noteworthy are the words of Cassiodorus about Amalasunta's command of Greek language. Obviously, this desire to master Greek literature as the most important quality of a Roman aristocrat was quite conscious in the royal family of Amals.

Moreover, it is entirely possible that the unconditional support of the Roman political elite by Ostrogoth Theodoric at the end of the 5th century was connected precisely with his political career in the East, where, being a young man, he helped Zeno to return to the throne and reached high posts doing military service. It is not surprising that Ennodius who praised Theodoric in panegyric, sees the basis of many achievements of the King precisely in traits that were put in him during his youth, during his stay in Constantinople: "Greece has raised you in the lap of civic consciousness (*civilitatis*) anticipating the future" (Vogel, 1885).

If Theodoric himself could learn the Greek language during his stay in Constantinople, then his daughter grew up in Italy and, thanks to the family and the Gothic environment, mastered the native language, and the Latin environment and teachers filled her with knowledge of Latin (Tyulenev, 2014; 2015), the official language of the Empire. Studying the Greek language from a pragmatic point of view seems completely unnecessary, even if Cassiodorus says that knowledge of several languages by the Queen allows her to communicate with ambassadors at meetings without an interpreter (Mommsen, 1894). But from the ideological point of view, the benefits of this knowledge are quite obvious: not knowing the Greek language meant to cast doubt on belonging to Roman civilization, statehood. In fact, mastering of the Greek language by the Ostrogoth princess was a response to the aspiration of the Roman aristocracy, who wanted to see the court of the Gothic king similar to the imperial court, that is, the representation of the Roman elite about Greek culture formed the strategy of education in the barbarian royal house.

The Alamasunta's example is not unique. Apparently, not without the influence of the Roman educated elite, people like Cassiodorus, Amalasunta gave the traditional Roman school education to her son Atalaricus. And let the Latin sources remain silent about his studying Latin and Greek literature, from Procopius' messages one can assume that teachers invited by Amalasunta instructed her son of the royal blood in both eloquences (Dewing, 1928).

At the same time again, beginning with Cicero, the Greek world was perceived in Italy not only as an unconditional authority and teacher for the Romans (Nikishin, 2011). The opinion and evaluation were much more complicated. By V-VI centuries the attitude towards Greek culture, on the one hand, is simplified, the Greek culture is transformed into something generalized, conditional. On the other hand, it is obvious that the "disciple" (that is, the Latin world) has grown intellectually and began to perceive the knowledge borrowed from the Greeks as something of his own. Moreover, there is some jealousy towards the Greeks, a desire to show that the educated Latin will not yield to the enlightened Greeks. The words of Cassiodorus addressed to commit Cyprianus that Greece does not exceed him in fineness of intellect and is not in position to surprise him, are very revealing. Cassiodorus writes that, having gained knowledge, rather by experience than through reading, Cyprianus performed an ambassadorial mission to the East "sent to men of outstanding knowledge", so that "he was not embarrassed in their circle", as nothing could lead to

surprise (Mommson, 1894). Similarly, the estimate by Cassiodorus cited above to Boethius, has an important continuation. Boethius, in the author's opinion, not only made great Greek scholars speak Latin, but also returned the "mechanic of Archimedes ... in Latin attire" to the once Greek Sicily (Mommson, 1894). That is, now the Latin world is already becoming a teacher for the Greeks.

4. Conclusion

Summarizing the study, we must admit that assessments that the Greek world receives in writings of Latin authors of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century, reflect those processes that happened objectively in the Roman world of the late Antiquity. Perhaps these processes were not fully understood by contemporaries, but the feeling that the centre of gravity was moving to the East (which could not but cause some jealousy on the part of Western intellectuals) was certainly present. It was Greece, as educated Latin saw it, enriched the West with knowledge, and not vice versa, and if somewhere Romans won competition from Greeks as they thought, then again competing not in original, but in Greek arts. At the same time, the desire of Latin authors to discover and underline the self-sufficiency of the Latin world is becoming more and more noticeable, which has gradually reflected the closure of the Western world on its own, the formation of its own cultural and, through this, political world.

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